

534 SCHOOL MEALS POLICY

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that students receive healthy and nutritious meals through the school district's nutrition program and that school district employees, families, and students have a shared understanding of expectations regarding meal charges. The policy of the school district is to provide meals to students in a respectful manner and to maintain the dignity of students by prohibiting lunch shaming or otherwise ostracizing the student. The policy seeks to allow students to receive the nutrition they need to stay focused during the school day and minimize identification of students with insufficient funds to pay for a la carte items or second meals as well as to maintain the financial integrity of the school nutrition program.

II. PAYMENT OF MEALS

A. Payment for second meals or ala carte items is expected at the time the meal is served. Parents have three options to put money in their child's lunch account:

1. Online payments
2. Check sent to the child's school or Administrative offices
3. Cash sent to the child's school or Administrative offices

If the school district participates in the United States Department of Agriculture National School Lunch program and has an Identified Student Percentage below the federal percentage determined for all meals to be reimbursed at the free rate via the Community Eligibility Provision must participate in the free school meals program.

B. A school that participates in the United States Department of Agriculture National School Lunch program and has an Identified Student Percentage at or above the federal percentage determined for all meals to be reimbursed at the free rate must participate in the federal Community Eligibility Provision in order to participate in the free school meals program.

Families may apply for free/reduced-price meal benefits anytime during the school year. Meal applications are distributed to all families in the district prior to the student's first day of classes. In addition, applications are available on the school district website or available to be mailed via USPS if requested.

C. Each school that participates in the free school meals program must:

(1) participate in the United States Department of Agriculture School Breakfast Program and the United States Department of Agriculture National School Lunch Program; and

(2) provide to all students at no cost up to two federally reimbursable meals per school day, with a maximum of one free breakfast and one free lunch.

D. Once a meal has been placed on a student's tray or otherwise served to a student, the meal may not be subsequently withdrawn from the student by the cashier or other school official, whether or not the student has an outstanding meals balance.

E. When a student has a negative account balance, the student will not be allowed to charge a second meal or ala carte items.

F. If a parent or guardian chooses to send in one payment that is to be divided between sibling accounts, the parent or guardian must specify how the funds are to be distributed to the students' accounts.

III. LOW OR NEGATIVE ACCOUNT BALANCES – NOTIFICATION

- A. The school district will make reasonable efforts to notify families when meal account balances are low or fall below zero.
- B. Families will be notified of an outstanding negative balance once the negative balance reaches \$10.00. Families will be notified by monthly billings sent home.
- C. Reminders for payment of outstanding student meal balances will not demean or stigmatize any student participating in the school lunch program.

IV. UNPAID MEAL CHARGES

- A. The school district will make reasonable efforts to communicate with families to resolve the matter of unpaid charges. Where appropriate, families may be encouraged to apply for free or reduced-price meals for their children.
- B. The school district will make reasonable efforts to collect unpaid meal charges classified as delinquent debt. Unpaid meal charges are designated as delinquent debt when payment is overdue, the debt is considered collectable, and efforts are being made to collect it.
- C. Negative balances of more than \$50.00, not paid prior to the end of August, before new school year starts, will be turned over to accounts payable in the business services department for collection. In accordance with other outstanding debts owed to the school district, after attempts to collect are unsuccessful, the debts are turned over to the credit agency for collection.
- D. The school district may not enlist the assistance of non-school district employees, such as volunteers, to engage in debt collection efforts.
- E. The school district will not impose any other restriction prohibited under Minnesota Statutes, section 123B.37 due to unpaid student meal balances. The school district will not limit a student’s participation in any school activities, graduation ceremonies, field trips, athletics, activity clubs, or other extracurricular activities or access to materials, technology, or other items provided to students due to an unpaid student meal balance.

V. COMMUNICATION OF POLICY

- A. This policy and any pertinent supporting information shall be provided in writing (i.e., mail, email, back-to-school packet, student handbook, etc.) to:
 - 1. all households at or before the start of each school year;
 - 2. students and families who transfer into the school district, at the time of enrollment; and
 - 3. all school district personnel who are responsible for enforcing this policy.
- B. The school district will post this policy on the school district’s website, or the website of the organization where the meal is served, in addition to providing the required written notification described above.

Legal References: Minn. Stat. § 123B.37 (Prohibited Fees)
Minn. Stat. § 124D.111 (School Meals Policies; Lunch Aid; Food Service Accounting)
42 U.S.C. § 1751 *et seq.* (Healthy and Hunger-Free Kids Act)
7 C.F.R. § 210 *et seq.* (School Lunch Program Regulations)
7 C.F.R. § 220.8 (School Breakfast Program Regulations)
USDA Policy Memorandum SP 46-2016, Unpaid Meal Charges: Local Meal Charge Policies (2016)
USDA Policy Memorandum SP 47-2016, Unpaid Meal Charges: Clarification on Collection of Delinquent Meal Payments (2016)
USDA Policy Memorandum SP 23-2017, Unpaid Meal Charges: Guidance and Q&A

Cross References: None

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